

29 November 2019

Final declaration on the 3rd Caritas East-West Workshop "Fair Care Migration and Mobility in Europe"

Caritas organisations from Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Moldova, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Caritas Europa have been working for several years on the framework conditions under which care and nursing staff from Eastern European countries migrate to Western European countries to support mostly elderly people in need of care in their homes. On the basis of qualified concepts, various countries have developed viable east-west cooperation partnerships to enable the recruitment/exchange, support and qualification of migrant care workers and support staff, which have been successfully tested and backed up with a mission statement and primary quality criteria. The creation of social and labour market policy conditions, which should enable fair mobility and migration under a transparent framework, was an important goal.

Although the challenges facing long-term care in the European Member States are very different, the issue of looking after and caring for the elderly in our society is a European issue for the whole of society. Therefore, the Caritas organisations that participated in the workshop call for:

- (1) Acknowledgement that Europe's aging society is a relevant EU policy field

Due to an aging society, Europe needs generally binding minimum standards and a basic right to care and provision in all EU Member States. Live-in care can be a building block of needs-based care under regulated conditions. Nonetheless, the target countries are urged not to take live-in-care as a matter of course, but to develop concepts that are less reliant on the support of migrant care workers. The sending countries of care workers have to ensure that care workers do not have to leave their home country out of necessity. Alternatives for sustainable care and care models should be demanded and promoted across Europe.

- (2) For the recruitment and employment of live-in-care workers, the circumstances in the sending country, the individual circumstances of the persons, and the requirements in the destination country must always be taken into account.

In order for recruitment to succeed from the perspective of all stakeholders, recruitment/exchanges must be fair, humane, respectful of human rights, and responsibly designed. Regarding the recruitment of live-in-care workers, who are not typically nurses, it is important to remember that these individuals can also take on important care work in their countries of origin, especially if similar demographic developments are imminent in the destination countries.

- (3) Live-in-care workers have the right to legal employment

Caregivers and nurses from central, eastern and south-eastern European countries have the same employee rights as carers and nurses in the western countries. Due to the specific situations in which these people usually live in the household of the elderly person in need of care, there is a risk that the care work may be considered to be available and ready for work at all times, so 24 hours a day. But this is illegal. Live-in-care forces need comprehensive social security coverage.

- (4) Recruitment agencies that provide live-in-care services have to fulfil quality standards and are responsible for ensuring legal employment for live-in-care workers

There need to be quality standards for recruitment agencies so that people in need of care and their dependents can rely as a basis on having a legal employment contract.

- (5) Live in-care workers must be able to rely on on-the-spot attendance by a nurse available as a contact person

Recruitment agencies must also ensure that the nursing and care staff provided are assisted on site, assisted with technical and personal questions and have an available contact person in their mother tongue. The experience, of being left alone with the unpredictable risks in the household of a single person in need of long-term care, or unable to reach a family member in acute decision-making situations is one of the special burdens of live-in-care workers, which should be averted in the placement design.

- (6) Live-in-care professionals acquire competences as part of their job.

Working as a live-in-care worker requires a basic qualification. Nursing and care workers acquire competences in the care and support of elderly persons in need of care. Appropriate monitoring and employment-related further education (for example, through blended learning or similar) can be systematically deepened and made visible in order to then validate the qualified care worker through a recognition procedure of their acquired competences. As a result, they can gain credits toward a formal qualification or this can be used for further professional activities.